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[THE EDITOR.]

A. VERA.

[The following notice of Professor Vera, equally distinguished for his translations of numerous works of Hegel into French, and for his commentaries and original contributions to philosophy, we find in an old copy of the "Naples Observer."—Ed.]

We find in the "Rivista Settimanale" of the 21st October last, which is published in Milan, an interesting biography of Professor Vera, and we think that we are doing a kindness to our readers in reproducing it in this paper; first, because we believe that great thinkers do not belong to any country in particular, but to all countries; and, secondly, in regard to M. Vera, it may be said that he is not less an Englishman than an Italian or a Frenchman, as he has spent a great part of his life in England, and in some respects his name and works belong to the English philosophical world and intellectual life.

AUGUSTUS VERA.

Here is a commentator who shows the power of an original thinker; here is a *Gentile* who, having entered the Hegelian church, was proclaimed an apostle; an exalted favorite

among the French Eclecticians, who broke from their ties to assert the freedom of thought, and turned from the interests of the world and its honors to vindicate the rights of truth. Here is a man driven by fortune to foreign shores, who received the highest marks of respect in the metropolis of modern civilization, but who has retained a simplicity of manners which reminds us of Kant, who, like a clever swimmer, comes out of the ocean of idealism, and shows himself to be affable, kind, and without a shade of the affectation or pedantry of the philosopher and *savant*.

Augustus Vera, the great interpreter and successor of Hegel, not, indeed, in the chair of Berlin, but in the universal teaching, was born in Amelia, a small town in the province of Umbria, on the 4th of May, 1817, of Sante Vera and Giovanna Altieri.]

The Veras, an ancient burgher's family, came from Città di Castello, and were originally called Della Vera. Sante Vera was considered the cleverest advocate not only of his own place, but of the province, and, having accepted the ideas of the French revolution, was first Commissary under the republic, then Imperial Procurator under the Napoleonic government. Giuseppe Vera, his brother, was also a celebrated Roman lawyer, and although he too received with enthusiasm the new French ideas, and professed himself publicly to be a Republican, both in prose and verse, as he was an *improvisatore* (extemporary poet), yet he was at the same time held in such a high esteem for his learning, eloquence, and honesty, that at the pontifical restoration Cardinal Consalvi took him with him to the Congress of Vienna, where he was intrusted with the defence of the interests of the Prince of Piombino and of his claims on the isle of Elba.

Sante Vera was well versed in Latin literature, and sufficiently in the French, and he was the first instructor of his son. Both by words and example he instilled in him from his earliest infancy the love of science, and gave him the best education which the domestic conditions and the times afforded. And Augustus acknowledges that he owes in a great measure to his father what he is now.

Professor Vera commenced his studies in the seminary of Amelia, but after having been there a little more than a year he left it. There the first indications of his genius began to show themselves; vivacious, quick, and *inquisitive*, his questions and discussions on abstruse philosophical and theological points caused a priest, his instructor, to prognosticate—"This boy will be a Voltaire or a Saint Austin." From the seminary he went to the college at Spello, a small town between Foligno and Spoleto, and from thence to that of Todi, because these institutes had the reputation of being the best in those places.

While in the midst of his classic studies a singular accident sent him from Umbria into Tuscany. He had in Siena an uncle named Philip, the intimate friend of an Englishman, Mr. Gould Francis Leckie, who lived near Siena at a place called San Chimento. This gentleman, having no children, thought of adopting one, and, confiding his intentions to his friend, the latter proposed to him his nephew. The proposal was agreed to, and Augustus was sent for to be adopted. At first, all things went well. Mr. Leckie, himself a finished Greek scholar, finding that the boy had already some knowledge of the rudiments of the language, which he had acquired from one of his cousins, heartily assisted him to improve himself. But, in a few months, on account partly of the exacting and rather singular disposition of Leckie, and partly of the inexperience and the proud and independent character of the youth, the connection between them was broken, and he left San Chimento carrying with him, if nothing else, the advantage of a first initiation into the English language and manner of living. In French he had

already had sufficient practice from the instruction which he had received from his father, and especially from an Augustinian monk of the name of Guerri, who had spent most of his life in France.

From San Chimento his father sent him to Rome to study law, but he did not pay much attention to it; what pleased him most was archæology, and during the year which he spent at Rome he principally attended the lectures of Nibby, the celebrated illustrator of the eternal city, so that at the annual concours he gained the second prize.

About this time there returned from France a distant relation of his, Melchiade Fossati, a distinguished archæologist, known for his excavations at Canino, Grosseto, and other parts of the *Roman Campagna*, who was killed by a French shot at the siege of Rome. In his conversations with the youth, he convinced him that at that time neither in Rome nor indeed in Italy was there scope for talent, and that the best field for it was France. These words inspired him with a desire to go there, and after having spent a winter at Chiusi, making excavations with Fossati, he went to Paris.

Fossati had been long intimate with Ballanche, that gentle philosopher and harmonious writer, who joined the classic simplicity and imagination of the ancients with the advanced aspirations of modern progress. To him he introduced Vera, who, pleasing him at first sight, was welcomed by him as a son, so great was the kindness, so affectionate the care, so benevolent the advice, and so efficacious the support which he received from him. Vera cannot recall his venerable aspect and kind words without emotion.

He had been about a year, in Paris, studying and working, when he was offered the position of professor in the Institute of Hofwyl, near Berne, which was famous at that time, and which had been founded and was conducted by Fellenberg, the disciple of Pestalozzi. It was proposed to him by Julien of Paris, founder of the "*Revue Encyclopédique*" (1819), and celebrated for the part which he had taken in his youth in the atrocities of Carrière at Bordeaux and Nantes, although he energetically denied the fact, and asserted that, on the contrary, he had prevented many proscriptions and had saved many from death. He did not, however, remain more than a few months at Hofwyl, where he taught the French literature, neither the place nor the somewhat monastic and Puritan habits of the place suiting him.

From there he went to Geneva, where he was soon appointed a professor in the Institute of Champel, so called from being situated in Champel on the heights overlooking the Arve and the Rhône, and which is the place where Servetus was burned. Here he taught the Greek and Latin letters, and the rudiments of philosophy. In Switzerland he first commenced the study of the German language and philosophy, but, after remaining a certain time at this school, he felt the want of a wider field for his studies and activity, and returned to Paris.

It was then that Ballanche introduced him to Cousin, whom he often met afterwards at the house of Mme. Colet. In the first and long conversation which he had with Cousin, this last proposed to him a professorship of philosophy in these precise words: "*Voulez vous enrôler sous ma bannière?*" He accepted. He was not a Frenchman, nor had he taken any university degree, not even that of M. A. (bachelier); nevertheless, he was appointed and sent to Mont-de-Marsan, the chief town in the department of the Landes, with the obligation of taking the degree of bachelier within six months. He took it at Pau, where the professor of philosophy who examined him, M. de Mézière, said to him: "*Je regrette de devoir vous examiner, car vous devriez examiner et*

pas être examiné." He had then published nothing, and had been in the university only a few months, yet he was already numbered among the young professors of the greatest promise.

From Mont-de-Marsan he was sent successively to Toulon, Lille, and Paris, as "agrégé volant," that is to say, to supply the place of the professors absent, from sickness or other causes, in the lycéums at Paris. He then went as professor to Limoges, but was called anew to Paris to supply the place of Franck, at the Lyceum of Charle-Magne. From there he went to Rouen, and finally to Strasbourg.

He took the degree of "bachelier ès lettres" at Pau, that of "bachelier ès sciences" and the *licence* at Lyons, that of *agrégé de philosophie* in 1844, and that of doctor in 1845, at Paris.

His papers for the degree of doctor were the "Problème de la Certitude," and "De Platonis, Aristotelis et Hegelii de medio terminò doctrina." The examiners pronounced them to be the most remarkable which had been presented for a long time, and he was complimented on them by the Minister Salvandy. Besides these papers he did not publish much during his residence in France. At Lille he wrote especially for the literary part of the "Echo du Nord," a journal somewhat radical and almost republican in its tendencies, edited by Leleux. He published two or three articles (one on the logic of Hegel, in 1840) in the "Revue de Lyon," and several in the "Liberté de penser," a review founded in Paris by a society of professors.

He had pupils of illustrious families, Jules Durville, son of the admiral, a youth of high promise, who was burned alive with his father and mother in the railway accident at Versailles in 1842, one of the sons of Admiral Baudin, and the celebrated writer and novelist, Edmond About. He knew the two admirals, and it was at Lille that he became acquainted with M. Thiers, who used to spend at that time every year some months in that town, and with the General Magnan who was afterwards made a *Marschal*. Illustrious, also, were his acquaintances and connections among the philosophers and men of science. The first and dearest among them was Rémusat, the historian of Abelard, St. Anselm, and Bacon—"qui a des idées sur tout," as Tocqueville said of him. He knew Saint-Marc-Girardin, the elegant annalist of the drama; the erudite Victor Leclerc, lately dead, the renowned illustrator of the French literature of the Middle Ages; Vacherot; Ozanam; Garnier, the Cartesian; Damiron, the biographer of the contemporary philosophers and thinkers of the eighteenth century, the micrologist of whom Cousin said, "il voit tout par le trou de l'aiguille"; Jules Simon; Guignault, the translator of Creuzer; Saisset, the translator of the Spinoza, who died not long ago; and Frank, the author of the "Cabale," and the editor of the "Dictionnaire des sciences philosophiques."

In 1851, dissatisfied with the state of affairs in France, and feeling that no freedom was allowed to philosophical teaching, he went to England, where he remained until his return to Italy, in 1860. Twice was he invited to resume his position in France, but thought it best to decline the offer.

In England he gave public lectures and private lessons. Here he had also distinguished pupils, and, among others, a nephew of the Earl Russell, Arthur Russell, the present member for Tavistock, and brother of Odo, the representative of England at Rome; and he was acquainted with many illustrious personages, such as Richard Monckton Milnes, who has been raised to the peerage under the title of Lord Houghton, one of the wits of English society; Macaulay; Millman, Dean of St. Paul's, the editor of Gibbon and the historian of Christianity; Vandeweyer, the Belgian ambassa-

dor; Oxenford, the witty critic; and Hepworth Dixon, the author of a book on Bacon, and of another on the Holy Land.

The results of his long studies and profound meditations in France bore their fruit during his stay in England. Laying aside his connection with the "Athenæum," the "Emporio Italiano," and other journals, we will only mention his capital book, the "Introduction à la Philosophie de Hegel" (1855). It was a true revelation. Hegel had been both well and ill spoken of. People felt towards him the attraction which the forbidden fruit inspires, but he was known out of Germany about as much as the Egyptian hieroglyphics before Champollion, or the cuneiform inscriptions before Rawlinson; nay, even in his country, the thought of the modern Aristotle remained, as it were, enveloped in clouds. To some he appeared a prophet, to others an impostor. There were, it is true, those who had endeavored, with a superstructure of philosophical and common phrases, and furious attempts at French and Anglo-Italian parallelisms, mingled with German formulæ, to make him understood, but they were like—

. . . il poeta Cujo
Che con di molti lumi facea buio.

(The poet Cujo, who out of many lights made darkness.)

And behold! Vera, without using a word of German, in a French as pure and lucid as that of Malebranche, expounds the immense system of Hegel and unveils it to the admiration of the world. Two of Hegel's disciples, the depositaries of his doctrine, his Peter and Paul, Michelet (of Berlin) and Rosenkranz, thought they saw their master risen from the dead, and publicly honored the revealer, and the latter went so far as to say that the Germans could derive no small benefit from reading a book in which a great intellect, availing itself of a language at once transparent and precise, had made more luminous the conception of their master.

Prince Albert, whose mind was so highly cultivated, was struck with it, and spoke of it in the highest terms to the ministers and learned men, and even to his courtiers. His enthusiasm descended to his daughter, who was found by him one day at Berlin reading the book with her husband, the Crown Prince of Prussia. It was said that he would have intrusted Professor Vera with the philosophical instruction of the Prince of Wales had he not been prevented by the exigencies of his position and of the English society.

Count Mamiani, whose impartiality and distinguished mind are well known, invited Vera to return to Italy as professor of philosophy in the Scientific and Literary Academy at Milan. Here Vera taught only one year, lecturing also on the philosophy of history. We have read and admired his fine introductory lectures printed in French by Germer Baillière, but of his teachings his disciples can give an idea; but we expect more than an idea from his talented pupil, Raffaele Mariano, who has collected his lectures in Naples, where Vera has been transferred and has been teaching these last five years. Born in a province where the language is correctly spoken, and educated at Tuscany and Rome, notwithstanding his long residence in France and England, and his long intercourse with Hegel, Professor Vera, besides the fine and clear Roman pronunciation, has retained the pure and idiomatic character of his native language; but, finding this latter somewhat unsuited for the explanation of the new philosophy, or perhaps overpowered by the intuition of the absolute truth, he speaks slowly, and without connecting his thoughts with the artificial thread of the rhetoricians. But so great is the beauty of his ideas and so admirable his views, that the minds of his hearers remain

fixed in admiration, and he forms not disciples, but believers, capable of the free and absolute use of their own intellect.

We will speak another time of his translation of the "Logic" and of the "Philosophy of Nature" of Hegel, illustrated with introductions and commentaries, which make them original works of the highest order. The last especially is a very bold undertaking, being that part of the doctrine of Hegel most neglected by his own German disciples, and requiring to be explained not only a knowledge of the present state of physical sciences, but a superior mind, capable of overruling the system of truth now held in veneration.

We will speak another time also of his philosophical eloquence as well as of his critical and debating power, which are so well exemplified in his book, "L'Hégélianisme et la philosophie." To-day our object was only to render homage to a great thinker, great for his gigantic labors as well as for the ceaseless workings of his lofty mind.

GIULIO ANTIMACO.

SENTENCES IN PROSE AND VERSE.

SELECTED BY WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

VI.

No tarts that ever I tasted at any table possessed such a refreshing, cheering, encouraging acid, that literally put the heart in you and set you on edge for this world's experiences, bracing the spirit—as the cranberries I have plucked in the meadows in the spring. They cut the winter's phlegm, and now I can swallow another year of this world without other sauce.—*Ibid.*

How rich and autumnal the haze which blues the distant hill and fills the valleys!—*Ibid.*

I saw to-day a double reflection, in the pond, of the cars passing, one beneath the other, occasioned by a bright rippled streak on the surface of the water, from which a second reflection sprang.—*Ibid.*

For things that *pass are past*, and in this field
The indeficient spring no winter flaws.—*Giles Fletcher.*

And what's a life? The flourishing array
Of the proud summer meadow, which to-day
Wears her green plush, and is to-morrow hay.—*Quarles.*

The earth, the air, and seas I know, and all
The joys and horrors of their peace and wars;
And now will view the God's state and the stars.—*George Chapman.*

Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much.
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.—*Cowper.*